

Broken Promise

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A promise is easy to make but some times hard to keep. A broken promise leads to tragic consequences.

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Now

He plunged the kunai into her chest and deep into her heart.

It normally wouldn't have been possible to do that to a ninja. He'd only been able to because she had left herself open and unguarded. She had trusted him and allowed him to get in close where she was vulnerable.

She knew she was going to die, not even the Hokage's apprentice could heal a fatal wound. She was only able to gasp out a single word.

"Why?"

Her killer stared at her with cold unblinking eyes. "Because you broke your promise to me and I can't forgive you."

She stared at him and moved her mouth to try and answer but there was no sound. She fell, her blood already pouring out of her and staining her lovely kimono. She took a last shuddering breath and died. Her eyes were still wide open and looking up at him accusingly.

Naruto had no problem looking down into her face. She had *no* right to accuse or appear as if she were the one betrayed. As he stood there over her body he thought about killing Sasuke too. Strangely though he couldn't bring himself to feel much hate for him or to blame him. It had always been Sakura's decision, no one had ever forced her to do anything.

She was the only one to blame.

For a moment he considered breaking the seal and unleashing the Kyuubi. The thought of having **everyone** dying with him held a sudden powerful attraction. But there were still people he cared

about in the village; Iruka, Kakashi, Tsunade, Ayame, Teuchi, Shikamaru and a few others. He didn't want to cause their deaths too.

He would abandon the village instead. He would become a rogue ninja like Zabuza and Haku had been. *Maybe I'll try and go to Orochimaru like teme did.* From around his neck he removed the Shodai's necklace and placed it on a nearby table. Since he was giving up his dream to be Hokage he no longer had any right to wear it. He then removed his leaf hitai-ite, the one Iruka had given him years before, and dropped it in the pool of blood that was forming around Sakura.

He then walked out the door to escape Konoha before her body was found.

Six Minutes Earlier

"Is that you Ino? Kami you're half an hour early! The bridal party isn't supposed to..." Sakura opened the door to her apartment and her complaints died away on her lips. "Naruto? What are you doing here? And why are you in your ninja clothes? Shouldn't you be in a kimono?"

He had known her for years, ever since they were children, but she had never looked more beautiful than she did at that moment. She had put her hair up and had on blush and other make up. She was wearing a stunning white kimono with the image of cherry blossoms drifting on the wind imprinted on the front.

"You look really amazing Sakura-chan," he told her truthfully with a little ache in his voice. "I always knew you'd be a beautiful bride."

Her face blushed and she at least has the decency to look uncomfortable. "Naruto what are you doing here? I'm getting married in a couple of hours and you're supposed to be the best man."

"I just wanted to talk to you in private for a minute. Can I come in?"

She looked down and fidgeted uncomfortably. "I really don't think that would be appropriate."

"I haven't come here to try and steal you away I promise," he said with an easy smile. "All I want is just a few minutes of your time, that's all, then I'll leave."

She looked at him considering. "Okay, but just for a few minutes and just to talk okay? Then you need to get back and put your kimono on."

"Sure," he replied and she let him into her apartment.

He looked around and saw boxes everywhere.

"You're not wasting any time are you?" He asked pleasantly. "I guess you'll be moving in with Sasuke as soon as you're married."

"It's only proper for a married couple to live together, and besides he needs me."

Naruto looked at her longingly, she was so damn beautiful. "I need you too Sakura-chan."

"Naruto please don't! You know how I feel! Please don't look at me that way. You're a very important person to both me and Sasuke-kun, you're our former teammate and a dear friend."

"Yeah, the two of you have always treated me with such honesty and respect."

"Naruto please," she spoke to him imploringly. "I'm sorry for how we hurt you but can't we leave all that in the past? Can't we forgive and forget and get on with our lives?"

She had no idea at all how those words infuriated him. They suggested that they both had reason to forgive when the truth was

only one of them had ever been wronged.

"Sure Sakura-chan, the reason I came over was to tell you that I'm fine with how things turned out and I wish only the best for both of you." He held his arms out. "Can I get a hug from the bride before I go?"

Nodding with relief she came towards him with her arms out to hug him.

She came towards him open and defenseless.

One Day Earlier

The rehearsal had gone smoothly.

Everyone had play their parts just as they were meant to. Kakashi had acted as father of the bride walking Sakura down the aisle. Naruto had stood by Sasuke's side as the best man and provided the wedding bands when called to. Tsunade had pretended to perform the ceremony as both Sakura and Sasuke spoke their vows. Sakura was in tears even though it was only practice.

She never once cried for me, Naruto thought in a sudden epiphany. She cried for Sasuke on the bridge in Wave county when they thought he'd died. She'd cried for him when he'd been brought back to the village after trying to defect. She'd cried for him again and again whenever he was in pain. Her tears, the proof of her heart's true yearning, were only ever shed for Sasuke.

I was never worth a single tear, Naruto though in abrupt realization. His fists clenched and he had to suppress the urge to scream at her to stop crying.

Really, she was such a deceitful bitch. So loving and kind to one teammate and so uncaring and heartless to the other. In that instant he hated her more than he ever had, even more than when he'd

caught them. It didn't seem fair to him that someone like her should get to be happy while he was left with nothing.

One Week Earlier

Naruto was in the reception hall where they would all go after the ceremony to eat, drink, and dance.

Right now Sakura and Ino were going over the final details with the caterer. For some reason she had insisted that both Sasuke and he accompany her, yet neither of them had gotten to say a single word. (Not that either of them cared what napkins or place settings were going to be used anyway.)

Sasuke was in his wheelchair. The body manipulation jutsu worked well enough to allow him to stand and walk and even dance some, but it used up a lot of chakra. Ever since he was crippled he'd been bound to a wheelchair except for when he used the jutsu to give himself mobility. He'd accepted that his ninja career was over and that he would never get his revenge against his brother. He'd wound up focusing instead on restoring his clan.

As they both listened to Sakura and Ino go into monotonous detail about the placing of the various guests Sasuke spoke to him quietly.

"Thanks for agreeing to do this dobe, I know it must be hard for you."

"What are you talking about teme? How could I not be here for the both of you? We're all part of team seven right?"

Sasuke sent him a perceptive look. "I know I've caused you a lot of grief Naruto and I'm sorry for that. I just want you to know I consider you my best friend. I really am sorry for what I did to you."

Naruto looked at his friend and nodded. "It's okay Sasuke I don't blame you, and I'm sorry for what I did to you too."

Naruto turned his attention back to Sakura. He just didn't know how to take his eyes off of her.

Four Months Earlier

"We're getting married Naruto!" Sakura squealed with delight showing off her engagement ring.

His face froze.

He eventually managed a sickly smile and offered them stiff congratulations.

"Naruto we want you to be the best man at the wedding," Sasuke told him from his chair. Sakura was at his side and her hand was in his. She was looking at her crippled fiancé with such adoring loving eyes. "It would mean a lot to both of us."

The idea of being the best man at their wedding turned his stomach. He didn't even want to be there, let alone take part in the ceremony. "I don't think..."

"Oh Naruto-kun you have to! You brought Sasuke-kun back! This wouldn't even be happening without you! My joy is thanks to you!"

He stared at her. She had very neatly censored past events to give herself the fairy tale story she'd always wanted. All the painful ugly parts that didn't fit into her perfect story were discarded and forgotten.

She reached out with her free hand and took his, holding Sasuke with one hand and him with the other. "You have to be there! Say you'll do it Naruto-kun!"

And just like always she got what she wanted from him. He couldn't say no to her.

Eleven Months Earlier

He stood there unable to move or even breathe. He had come by unannounced to visit Sakura as she worked on Sasuke's physical therapy. What he'd seen was her sitting on his lap her arms wrapped about his shoulders kissing him eagerly.

His girlfriend making out with his best friend.

"Sakura! What are you doing?"

She'd jumped to her feet and both she and Sasuke had looked ashamed. But Sakura had straightened her shoulders and faced him.

"I'm sorry you had to find you this way Naruto, but I guess it's time I told you the truth. I'm in love with Sasuke! I always have been! I'm sorry but he's the one I want to be with."

He could feel his heart breaking. She didn't even seem upset to be caught like this! *Shouldn't she be crying at least?* "But... but you love me Sakura-chan! Sakura I love you with all of my heart!"

"I'm sorry," she shook her head and spoke with a firm voice. "I tried to love you Naruto I really did, but I never felt that way. I love you as a friend only."

"As a friend? But we, you and I we've..."

"Please don't mention that!" Sakura looked guiltily to Sasuke, worried what *he* might think of her. "That was a mistake Naruto, us trying to be together was all a mistake. I'm sorry you had to find out like this, but it's over."

"Just like that? But you said that you loved me!"

"I said that to make you happy," she told him with a calm accepting air. "I do love you Naruto, but only as a friend."

His entire world was falling apart. Everything that mattered to him and gave his life meaning was being ripped down with Sakura's cool and deliberate words.

"But your promise..."

"Naruto I was 12! You can't hold me to that! I tried to keep my promise! You know I did, but I can't hold something I said when I was a child over the feelings I have in my heart."

"You never really loved me?" He spoke in a lifeless whisper.

Sakura shook her head. "No, not in the way you mean. I'm sorry."

Naruto stumbled out and left, not sure where he was going. He thought if he stayed there he just might try to kill her.

Thirteen Months Earlier

She was lying underneath him in his bed as he was making passionate desperate love to her.

"I love you Sakura-chan! I love you so much!" He panted in her ear.

"I love you too," she told him.

He smiled. She was so shy and proper in bed! Whenever she told him she loved him it was always in such a polite way, as if she was afraid of showing her true feelings. He didn't mind, he thought it cute and sweet. She was his girlfriend and he thought it unbelievably sweet.

He was hoping they could marry soon, but when he'd asked her she'd begged off telling him it was much too soon to think about. That was all right with him. He would wait until she was comfortable. He would do anything for her. She was his whole world and all he wanted was to make her happy.

A Year and a Half Earlier

"Naruto-kun I'm going to be working with Sasuke again most of the day tomorrow."

"Again," he whined. She was Tsunade's apprentice and a damn fine medic nin so he understood why she spent so much time trying to help Sasuke deal with his injuries. Even so...

"You know you're spending a lot of time with him, more than you're spending with me!"

"Jealous?" She teased.

"Should I be?"

She made a face and gave him a kiss. "Don't be silly, he's a patient. You are my boyfriend I love you."

"You used to love Sasuke," he pointed out.

"That's in the past now," she leaned in and gave him another kiss, this one longer and deeper. "You trust me right?"

"Of course Sakura-chan, I know you would never betray me."

"Good," she said and headed to the door. "I'll see you tonight after I get done treating Sasuke-kun."

Three Years Earlier

"Hey Sakura-chan," he asked her one night as they were on a date. "Do you really love me?"

She looked over at him in surprise. "Well of course I do silly, you're my boyfriend after all."

"I know, and I really love having you as my girlfriend it's just..."

"Just what?"

"Well," he hesitated. "It's just that when you say it it doesn't sound like you mean it."

"That's just because I'm shy about showing how I feel is all," she told him.

"You never had that problem with Sasuke," he mumbled.

She laughed softly and gave him a gentle kiss. "I'm more mature than I used to be. I love you and only you Naruto, please believe me."

He slowly nodded and let the matter drop. He had faith in her and knew he could trust her.

"Oh by the way," she added in a nonchalant manner. "Tsunade-sensei has agreed to let me be Sasuke-kun's primary therapist. Isn't that great?"

"Yeah it is," he agreed. Sakura had assured him she was no longer in love with Sasuke and he believed her. "I'm sure with you there Sasuke will recover really quickly."

Three Years Six Months Earlier

Sakura was in the waiting room when Kakashi and medic team one arrived with both Naruto and Sasuke in critical condition. They were not the first casualties. Kiba had been stabbed and been in serious condition while Chouji and Neji had almost died.

The two boys were sent to separate operating rooms as Kakashi told her what had happened. Apparently they had fought one another with Sasuke rupturing one of Naruto's lungs and Naruto severing

Sasuke's spinal chord. Even if Sasuke lived he would never walk again under his own power. He would never be a ninja again.

Naruto was sent to operating room 1 while Sasuke was sent to operating room 3. Sakura didn't hesitate before hurrying to wait outside of operating room 3.

Naruto, Neji, Kiba, Chouji, and Shikamaru were about to set off to go after Sasuke when a weeping Sakura arrived.

"Naruto! Bring Sasuke-kun back! You're the only one who can." She looked at him through her tears. "If you bring him back I promise that I will love you and only you Naruto!"

"Really Sakura? You really mean that?"

"Sakura," Shikamaru spoke with a frown. "No matter how desperate you are I don't think you can promise something like that. You can't just promise to love someone."

"I can!" She insisted. The only thing on her mind was giving Naruto whatever motivation it took for him to save Sasuke. "I swear in kami's name that if Naruto brings him back to the village I will love only him forever!"

"In that case I will definitely bring him back Sakura!" He smiled and gave her a 'good guy' pose. "That is my promise of a lifetime."

Shikamaru shook his head as he had a bad feeling. "Sakura, this promise is going to get you into trouble."

"I don't care as long as it gets Sasuke-kun back!"

"Don't worry Sakura-chan I will definitely bring him back no matter what!" Naruto swore.

As Naruto set off with his team he had no doubt at all that he would keep his promise and that Sakura would keep hers.

Everything would be wonderful.